

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Nairnshire Committee** held in the Chamber, The Court House, High Street, Nairn on Friday, 23 June 2017 at 10.30 am

Present:

Mr L Fraser
Mr T Heggie

Mrs L MacDonald
Mr P Saggars

In attendance:

Ms L Cowie, Ward Manager, Nairn and Badenoch and Strathspey
Mr S Fraser, Head of Corporate Governance, Corporate Development
Mr R Porteous, Road Operations Manager, Community Services
Mr R MacLeod, Principal Housing Officer, Community Services
Mr S Eastaugh, Access Officer, Development & Infrastructure Service
Mr S Taylor, Administrative Assistant, Corporate Development

Also in attendance:

Mr A Rankin, Project Manager, Nairn Business Improvement District (Item 5)
Mr M Boylan, Chair, Association of Nairn Businesses (Item 5)
Mr D Wilkie, Station Manager - Service Delivery, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (Item 9)

An asterisk in the margin denotes a recommendation to the Council. All decisions with no marking in the margin are delegated to the Committee.

Ms L Cowie in the Chair

Business

1. Apologies for Absence Leisgeulan

There were no apologies for absence.

2. Declarations of Interest Foillseachaidhean Com-pàirt

The Committee **NOTED** the following Declarations of Interest:-

Item 8 – Mr L Fraser and Mrs L MacDonald (both non-financial)
Item 11 – Mr L Fraser and Mrs L MacDonald (both non-financial)

3. Recess Powers Cumhachdan Fosaidh

It was **NOTED** that the recess powers granted by the Council at its meeting on 9 March 2017 had not required to be exercised in relation to the business of this Committee.

**4. Appointment of Chair
Suidheachadh de Chathraiche**

The Committee **AGREED** to appoint Mr T Heggie as Chair.

Mr Heggie then took the Chair.

**5. Appointment of Provost
Cur an Dreuchd Pròbhaist**

The Committee **AGREED** to appoint Mr L Fraser as Provost of Nairn.

**6. Member Appointments – Inverness and Nairn Local Access Forum
Cur an Dreuchd**

The Committee **AGREED** to appoint Mrs L MacDonald to the Inverness and Nairn Local Access Forum.

It was further **AGREED** that in the event that Mrs MacDonald was unable to attend a meeting of the Forum, a substitute from the remaining Members of the Committee would be invited to attend in her absence.

**7. Nairn Business Improvement District (BID)
Narann (BID)**

A presentation was given by Mr A Rankin, Project Manager, Nairn Business Improvement District (BID) Project Manager and Mr M Boylan, Chair of the Association of Nairn Businesses outlining the proposed Nairn (BID), during which it was explained that BIDs had been established in Scotland to bring together local businesses and statutory authorities to drive economic sustainability through partnership working. An overview of the timetable for the Nairn BID was provided, during which it was highlighted that the first phase would include the set-up of a local steering group to help shape the vision and framework for the Nairn BID and that businesses with non-domestic property owners were invited to contact Mr Rankin regarding the potential to join the local steering group for Nairn. Details were provided of the Nairn BID website, www.nairnconnects.com, during which it was explained that this would act as a business portal and communication channel for interest parties and contained further information on how other BIDs in Scotland operated.

In discussion, the following points were raised:-

- Acknowledgement was made of the efforts of the previous Chair of the Committee, Mr Michael Green to promote the Nairn BID in the area;
- Confirmation was sought, and received, that the views of volunteer groups within the area would be sought during the consultation period at the start of the BID process;
- The prospect of a Nairn BID was welcomed and it was highlighted that other areas in Scotland had been rejuvenated by BIDs; and
- The Chair welcomed the opportunity to work with Nairn BID in the future.

Thereafter the Committee **NOTED** the presentation.

8. **Nairn Common Good Fund – River Nairn Fishings**
Maoin Math Coitcheann Inbhir Narann – Iasgach Abhainn Narann

Declarations of Interest:-

Mr L Fraser declared a non-financial interest in this item as a ticket seller on behalf of the Nairn Angling Association but, having applied the test outlined in Paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 of the Councillors' Code of Conduct, concluded that his interest did not preclude his involvement in the discussion.

Mrs L MacDonald declared a non-financial interest in this item as a member of Nairn Fisheries Board but, having applied the test outlined in Paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 of the Councillors' Code of Conduct, concluded that her interest did not preclude her involvement in the discussion.

There had been circulated Report No N/5/17 dated 13 June 2017 by the Head of Corporate Governance.

During discussion, the following comments were made:-

- Reassurance was sought, and received, that if any further evidence came to light to suggest that the fishings on the River Nairn did not form part of the Nairn Common Good Fund then the situation would be reviewed;
- In relation to the Nairn River Fishings valuation, the decrease in fishing rates from £9k to £3k was welcomed. It was emphasised that any appeal to this revaluation could result in a further reduction without the consequence of an increase if an appeal was unsuccessful. Therefore, it was suggested that appropriate professional input be sought, within the Council's governance, to support the Nairn Common Good Funds' case in any appeal regarding the valuation;
- A request had been received from the Nairn District Salmon Fishery Board for the Committee to nominate a Member to the position of Upper Beat Proprietor for the Nairn District Salmon Fishery Board; and
- In acknowledging the research work undertaken by the Council's legal team and the evidence presented to the Committee, Members were of the view that there was now a clear indication that the fishings on the River Nairn were properly considered to form and to be administered as part of the Nairn Common Good Fund.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** that further enquiry had established that the fishings on the River Nairn fall to be considered as part of the Nairn Common Good Fund;
- ii. **AGREED** that the fishings on the River Nairn be administered as part of the Nairn Common Good Fund; and
- iii. **AGREED** that appropriate professional input be sought, within the Council's governance, to support the Nairn Common Good Funds case in any appeal regarding the Nairn River Fishings valuation.

The Committee also **AGREED** to nominate Mr P Saggars to the position of Upper Beat Proprietor for the Nairn District Salmon Fishery Board.

9. Scottish Fire and Rescue Service – Local Committee Performance Report for 2016-17
Aithisg Coileanaidh Comataidh Sgìreil Smàlaidh agus Teasairginn na h-Alba airson 2016-17

There had been circulated Report No N/6/17 dated 2 June 2017 by the Local Senior Officer for Highland (Scottish Fire and Rescue Service).

Following comment from the Chair, during which he thanked the staff of the Nairn fire appliances for their work, the Committee **NOTED** and scrutinised the Area Performance Report.

10. Nairn Roads Maintenance Programme
Prògraman Càradh Rathaidean Inbhir Narann

There had been circulated Report No N/7/17 dated 6 June 2017 by the Director of Community Services.

During discussion, the following comments were made:-

- Confirmation was sought, and received, that a £4.5k allocation had been made for the use of the Council's Jetpatcher vehicle within Nairn for the purpose of impact patching road surfaces in various locations;
- In relation to structural road maintenance, it was confirmed that the figure of 2,200m in length was the sum of the number of patches required on the A939 at Cairn Duhie. It was also confirmed that whilst pavements were not included within the programme, more localised repairs would be included with the revenue budget;
- It was requested that regular updates be provided to the Committee on flood prevention works in relation to Auldearn Burn;
- Concern was expressed that the Road Asset Management Plan did not include an allocation for flood alleviation and coastal protection. In response, it was explained that whilst funding for these types of maintenance was held at Headquarters, works in relation to these was managed locally;
- Following a request for the Committee agenda to contain more items which would enable greater local decision making and the ability to set local priorities, solutions and opportunities, the Chair emphasised that this was only the first meeting of the Committee following the Council elections and that in the context of the Localism agenda going forward, more items requiring local decision making could be included;
- The pro-active approach taken by Cawdor and Auldearn community councils in relation to addressing local issues including filling in pot-holes on the Smiddy Brae and improving the standards of grass-cutting works in Auldearn was commended;
- It was highlighted that no allocation had been made in the budget in relation to Timber Transport Routes in Nairn. In response, it was confirmed that funding had been sought in relation to the widening of the road on either side of the proposed replacement bridge at White Bridge and that replacement of the bridge was currently scheduled within the Capital Programme for 2018/19; and

- An increase in the use of minor roads in the area as “rat-runs” had resulted in an increase in maintenance issues, such as over-runs on narrow sections of road, which might not otherwise have been predicted.

The Committee **APPROVED** the Nairn Roads Maintenance Programme for 2017/18 and **AGREED** that regular updates be provided on flood prevention works in relation to Auldearn Burn.

**11. Housing Performance Report – 1 April 2016 to 31 March 2017
Aithisg Dèanadais Taigheadais – 1 Giblean 2016 gu 31 Mart 2017**

Declarations of Interest:-

Mr L Fraser declared a non-financial interest in this item as a Sub-Contractor for the Housing Service in Nairn but, having applied the test outlined in Paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 of the Councillors’ Code of Conduct, concluded that his interest did not preclude his involvement in the discussion.

Mrs L MacDonald declared a non-financial interest in part of this item, as discussion arose in relation to proposals for housing at Lochloy and intimated that she would not take part in any discussion on that specific matter.

There had been circulated Report No N/8/17 dated 26 May 2017 by the Director of Community Services.

During discussion, the following points were raised:-

- Concern was expressed regarding an increase in re-let times in Nairn during the fourth quarter of 2016/17. In response, it was explained that over the course of the period there had a number of unusual circumstances which had led to this increase, including difficulty contacting next of kin following the deaths of six tenants and the refurbishment of ten properties. It was also explained that a property was held void in order for a tenant to be transferred from a property that had been affected by fire;
- There had been a decrease in rent arrears performance during 2016/17 following a high increase the previous year and the Council’s housing staff were commended for their work in providing assistance to people who had found themselves in arrears due to the adverse effect they had experienced from the switch in benefit payments to universal credit;
- Concern was expressed regarding the comparatively small number of relets available within Nairnshire to the high number of people currently on waiting lists for housing in the area and it was suggested that, following the Scottish Government’s recent announcement of an allocation of £125m for affordable housing in Highland, a report be brought back to Committee on the potential to build council housing on Sandown Lands;
- It was highlighted that there were currently plans for 90 houses at Lochloy in Nairn and the potential for the development to include affordable housing was suggested; and
- Following a request for further information, it was explained that Council would not look to write-off any rent arrears as these were in relation to current tenants. A further request was made for information to be provided on the amount of rent arrears the Council had written-off over the previous financial year.

The Committee **NOTED** and scrutinised the information provided on housing performance in the period 1 April 2016 to 31 March 2017 and **AGREED** that discussion be held at a future Ward Business Meeting with the Head of Development and Regeneration in the first instance on the potential to build council housing on Sandown Lands.

**12. Minutes of Previous Meeting
Geàrr-chunntas**

There had been circulated for noting Minutes of Meeting of the Nairnshire Committee held on 20 February 2017, which had been approved by the Council on 9 March 2017.

The meeting concluded at 11.45 am